

May the grace, mercy, and peace of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour be your today. Amen. The title for today’s sermon is taken directly from today’s Epistle text, from the first letter of St. Peter chapter 3, which reads: “*Baptism now saves you*”. Let us pray...Amen.

I have the wonderful opportunity to talk to many different people in many different walks of life. And I enjoy talking and I enjoy listening. Now, as a Christian, as a pastor, as a father, as a husband, and as a Lutheran, people do ask some interesting questions. One question which sometimes comes up is: “When were you saved?” Personally I don’t really like this question, because it is not really the question they are looking to ask. As such my answer often confounds those who ask me. It’s important to note that very few in the Lutheran church ever ask this question because the implication behind the question is that at some point you had to do something to save yourself. What the asker usually is looking for is a date and a time when a decision was made, an action taken, and salvation received. As a result, how a person answers this question often reveals much about a person’s view of God, their view of sin, and their view of the work of Jesus Christ.

Still, let me ask you, when were you saved? I mean really saved? Think about it, gnaw on it. Can you tell me a set time and date when you were saved?

Before you get too far, remember what God says in Scripture about ourselves. King David wrote in Psalms, “**Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.**”(Psalm 51:5) God told Isaiah how “**We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. ... There is no one who calls upon God’s name, who rouses himself to take hold of God**”(Isaiah 64:6a,7a). God also told Noah that “**the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth**”(Genesis 8:21), right from childhood. But its not just the Old Testament which tells us this, God’s inspired Word in the New Testament proclaims that “**we were by nature children of wrath**”(Ephesians 2:3). We hear “**You were dead in your trespasses and sins**”(Ephesians 2:1), because “**there is no distinction: for all sin and fall short of the glory of God.**”(Romans 3:22-23) Apart from Christ and in our sin, you, me, and all people are enemies of God, spiritually blind, spiritually dead, and unable choose God, unable to pick, unable to come to God, unable to truly fear or love God.

So, going back to the question, when were you saved? When was a decision was made, an action taken, and salvation accomplished for you. *Pause.* You were saved on a Friday, most likely in April, around 3:00PM and most likely in the Year of our Lord, *Anno Domini*, or A.D. 33. *Pause, Pause.* That was the day, Christ Jesus made the decision and took upon Himself all you sins and their due punishment. There on that Friday He took the action and died in your place. As Christ proclaimed in His dying breath “**It is Finished!**”(John 19:30) it was finished, your salvation accomplished for you because the full payment to purchase you was made by Jesus through His holy and precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. And the

best part is you had nothing to do with it, Christ Jesus did it all in your place. Jesus said “**you did not choose me, but I choose you**”(John 15:16).

But, going back to the question, usually what is meant is when did you receive this salvation? This answer is even more straightforward to pin down. Peter proclaimed this in today’s Epistle: “**Baptism, ..., now saves you, ...,through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”(1 Peter 3:21) There through water and God’s Word you brought from being a child of Satan and were made a child of God. There at the font you were saved. God’s Word is that clear. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for the express purpose to save sinners: you, me, and all people. The best resource is “**Christ’s words, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.”** [Mark 16:16] ²⁴ **To put it most simply, the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of Baptism is to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince or princess, Premier or Prime Minister, but, as the words say, to “be saved.”** [1 Peter 3:21] ²⁵ **We know that to be saved is nothing other than to be delivered from sin, death and the devil [Colossians 1:13-14]. It means to enter into Christ’s kingdom [John 3:5] and live with Him forever.”** (Luther’s Large Catechism, IV, 23-25)

Christ’s gift of salvation was given to you when you were “**buried with Christ Jesus in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead.**” ¹³ **And you, who were dead in your trespasses..., God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,** ¹⁴ **by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross.”**(Colossians 2:12-14) We can say with Paul, “**But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**”(Galatians 6:14)

In baptism you died with Christ. Back on Good Friday afternoon, about 3:00PM local time, in the year A.D. 33; you died with Christ nailed to the cross. There in baptism you were buried with Christ and were placed with Him into the tomb. Yet you were also raised that first Easter morning with Christ, His eternal life given to you and in which you now live [Romans 6:3-10]. This is why Peter can proclaim “**Baptism now saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”(1 Peter 3:21) You are saved. You are washed and blessed with all the gifts Jesus earned for you, namely: the forgiveness of all yours sins, deliverance from death and the devil, and eternal life. Instead of being robed in the filthy rags of sin and unrighteousness, through Baptism Christ “**has clothed you with the garments of salvation; He has covered you with the robe of righteousness**”(Isaiah 61:10).

All the blessings and gifts of Baptism you receive by faith; faith also being a gift of God. The catechism teaches that “**by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel,**

enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”(*Small Catechism, 2nd Article, WDTM*)

God speaks through Paul to tell us that “**faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ**”(Romans 10:17), and how “**by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of our works, so that no one may boast.**”(Ephesians 2:8-9)

It is the Holy Spirit’s work through God’s Means of Grace, namely His Word and Sacraments, that bring us to faith, strengthen our faith, feeds our faith, and keep us in the true faith.

In this faith we rejoice a little extra today. Today is Confirmation Sunday. At this time we rejoice in the gifts God has blessed these seven youth with through their baptisms. We rejoice in the grace He poured out on them some 12, 13, or 14 years ago, where He brought them from being children of the devil and made them children of God! Where God delivered them from sin, death, and the devil, and gave them eternal life and the salvation in which they live. There the Holy Spirit did the work to bring them the salvation Christ earned for them and God became their Father. We rejoice in the work the Holy Spirit has done in the years since their baptism, and which He continues to do, through their parents, grandparents, extended family, Sunday School teachers, pastors, and greater church family to speak, shared, and teach them God’s Word. May the Holy Spirit continue to use each of you as a witness of His grace and salvation to those around you.

One main purpose of Confirmation is to equip the youth so “**in their hearts they honor Christ the Lord as holy, and are always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks them for a reason for the hope that is in them**”(1 Peter 3:15) as they are about to do publicly. It is, as Paul says, “**with the heart one believe and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.**”(Romans 10:10) As important as confirmation is, it is NOT for the forgiveness of sins, rather it is a public recognition of the forgiveness and salvation they’ve already received in Baptism and the faith they share with each of us in the Lutheran Church. It is a recognition of the grace they received in Baptism and strengthened through their regular hearing of God’s Word. It is in this grace, knowing “**Baptism saves each of you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**”(1 Peter 3:21), that each of us lives. It is also to prepare them to recognize what they are about to receive in the Lord’s Supper, which is not just bread and wine, where it is not symbolic, rather it is where Christ Himself comes in, with, and under the bread and wine with His very own body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of all sins, to strengthen to face this world, and to grow in love for God and others.

In the words of the Sermon hymn “God’s own child I gladly say it, I am baptized into Christ. He because I could not pay it, gave my full redemption price. Do I need earth’s treasures many? I have one worth more than any that gave me salvation free, lasting to eternity.” (God’s Own Child, LSB #594, v.1) Here is the gift all who are baptized have received, here is the gift these seven are rejoicing in as each baptized believer can rejoice in.

For “**Baptism *has* saved you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**”(1 Peter 3:21)
Thanks be to God in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour! Amen.

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